

Munro, H. K., The taxonomist and his needs (Presidential Address, 1945),
Jour. Ent. Soc. Southern Africa, IX: 3-6, 1946.

"It may at times be felt that entomology is a most unsatisfactory science; there are altogether too many insects. Immediate qualification is needed; conditions are probably neither better nor worse than in zoology in general, or in botany, or in biological sciences generally. Comparison with such sciences as astronomy and geology may not convey much that is worth while. All the same, if one wants an interesting and absorbing occupation, either as a professional or as a hobby or both as is the habit of some unfortunates, the study of insects, their lives, habits and classification, is one of the best. The amount of satisfaction obtained from such a study will depend partly on the nature of the subject, but mostly perhaps on the personality of the worker and on his temperament and outlook.

"Entomology as a whole is so vast that no single worker can expect to master more than a small fraction. Of two major divisions of the science, the economic and the systematic, a more sharply marked dividing line might be desirable, both as regards personnel and training. Economic and systematic interests would, however, meet on the common ground of general biology. In considering the position as it is at the present time, one gains the impression that it is the economic aspect that is the one that is more to the fore. That the systematist tends to be in the background may be partly his own fault, partly to the actual lack of suitable workers, partly to the nature of the work, but general lack of opportunity for him to take up such studies as a profession must not be forgotten.

"There is some tendency for the systematist, or taxonomist, in entomology to endeavour to assert his rights, but it is an uphill task.....

"On the other hand, the systematist is often, if not usually, of a peculiar temperament. ...he is always anxious and willing to get on with his work in and out of season. ... Difficulties that arise may be due in part to the worker himself, his temperament and the manner of presentation

of his work, in part to a lack of division of labour and of appreciation of the duties of the systematist.

"The improvement in the status of the systematist is an urgent matter.

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"A sound classification is the only basis for a stable nomenclature, and the taxonomist must therefore be given every opportunity to carry out the work involved. He must have facilities, time and a remuneration commensurate with the best offered in other branches of his science and with the importance of the work he does.

"It is an open question as to how far a systematist should collect material for himself. If he is to retain a real, live interest in his work ... he must keep in touch with field work and increase his knowledge of the general biology of the insects he studies. Unfortunately, the nature of the work, the accumulation of material and often circumstances in general, all too often lead to the systematist becoming a slave to the microscope.

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"The taxonomic entomologist must be a general biologist; he must have a knowledge of insect morphology in general and of his group in particular; a sound knowledge of nomenclature and classification, their aims and methods, including statistics, is essential. As a linguist he need not be a profound philologist, but needs to give due attention to semantics. A knowledge of bibliography and of sound methods of indexing and recording are keys to efficient work. Mechanical aids such as microscopy and photography must not be neglected and a knowledge of carpentry will not come amiss. Finally, if the systematist is to succeed, it is almost more than essential that he should, in most cases, be born to the work."